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U.S. Acts To Stiffen Security

Will Trim List Of Clearances For Top Secret

By Ken W. Clawson
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon has ordered all government agencies to compile lists of persons, in and out of government, who have top-secret clearances with the aim of sharply reducing the number of security clearances.

In a memo labeled "administratively confidential," the White House also ordered federal agencies to immediately initiate a review of outside individuals and organizations holding classified materials "... with the aim of drastically reducing such nongovernment holdings."

The memo, signed by Brig. Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, said that "the President has directed that the following actions be taken ...:

By noon Saturday, each federal agency, including the White House itself, must submit a list of the number of government employees, outside consultants and private contractors who hold clearances for access to top-secret information and "the various categories of compartmented intelligence data."

By the end of July, the federal agencies are ordered to turn over to the White House the names of the holders of secret clearances broken down to indicate government and nongovernment employment.

"It is further directed that each responsible department and agency initiate at once a review and screening of each top-secret and compartmented clearance presently held by individuals in the above employment categories with a view to effecting immediate reductions of all clearances which cannot be demonstrated to meet the requirement of strict need to know.

"Particular consideration is to be given to the screening of employees in the consultant and contracted categories," the Haig memo said.

The memo, written on White House stationery, was dated June 30, two days before Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird ordered Air Force security men to take custody of all classified documents held by the Rand Corp., the leading private "think tank" engaged in defense research. Laird alleged earlier that there were "security compromises" at Rand.

Laird's direct action and President Nixon pledge to tighten up security clearances across the board followed disclosures June 28 by Daniel Ellsberg, a former Rand researcher and Pentagon official, that it was he who leaked secret Pentagon papers to the press.

The White House memo made it clear that Mr. Nixon means to get a handle on security clearances, estimated variously at between thousands and hundreds of thousands, and to pare the list considerably. The top-secret clearances are awarded by individual government agencies and branches and there currently is no central repository in the government.

A check yesterday of key government agencies where top secret clearances are most prevalent also revealed that the agencies themselves do not know who—or how many—hold top security clearances. The Pentagon, for example, said the figures are "not readily available" nor are the identifications of those holding clearances compiled.

Officials at the State Department said they don't have the information sought by the President and said they would be surprised if it could be compiled by noon Saturday, the presidential deadline.

One official said he believed about 10,000 Foreign Service Officers have top secret clearance as did, presumably, technical specialists. But he said the State Department has many outside consultants who are called on only rarely who presumably also have top secret clearances.

All agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation have top secret clearances by virtue of their jobs, although the need-to-know application actually limits the number of persons who see classified documents.

It is understood that other federal intelligence agents also must pass a top secret security investigation as a precondition to employment.

The Justice Department, which is prosecuting Ellsberg for a security breach, also could not indicate yesterday the number or the names of its personnel who are cleared for top secret documents. A spokesman said that a "wild guess" would place the figure at a "few hundred."

A White House official said a similar survey was being "didn't have any idea" how taken in the Executive Office of the President, but that he many top secret clearances were held there.

Directives in the new Nixon memo appeared to grow directly out of disclosures from the secret Pentagon papers and were not related to a Jan. 15 memo in which the President called for broader and speedier declassification procedures and for a continuing review of that process.

The January directive was also confidential, but it was made public by the White House June 22, at the height of government efforts to stop publication of the top-secret Pentagon papers.

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